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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:
FINAL EVALUATION

STEP: THE SOUTHERN THAILAND
EXPERIMENTAL PROJECT

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- Map and success rankings of project villages
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I. INTRODUCTION

This summary consists essentially of the first and final chapters of the full evaluation report. The outline of the full study is included as a key for those wishing to read the details on any point here in the larger report.

II. SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES AND FINDINGS

A. PROJECT OVERVIEW

1. Background: Key Actors

The Southern Regional NFE Center and World Education, Inc. initiated sustained operational project action in June, 1983, almost 10 months after the project agreement between the latter and USAID was signed. Project funded operations ended in December, 1985 after a four month extension approved by USAID. Originally planned for 20 village sites in the southern "poverty-designated" provinces of Nakhonsrithammarat, Phatthalung, Satun, and Songkhla, the STEP approach was ultimately conducted in 22 sites with project funds and another two sites under other funding arrangements. The Regional Center was responsible for project decisions and operations, while World Education provided technical assistance through a full time project advisor, short-term local and international consultants, volunteer professionals and academics, and the provision of literature related to key project development premises, assumptions, and strategies. This latter service, often neglected, was systematic and an important contribution to project evaluation and training efforts and the compu-

terization of project data.

2. Objectives

STEP's objectives were:

- (1) To improve the ability of those who participate in the program to achieve common educational/development goals....;
- (2) To alleviate ... the village conditions identified by the villagers themselves as priority problems and selected by them for analysis and group action; and
- (3) To discover and document some principles related to how formal and nonformal education can be linked with development goal and activities; and to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the model proposed so that it can be adapted to other parts of Thailand.

3. Principles and Approach

The project approach was guided by a series of educational and development premises and concepts. Those that this evaluation suggests were most important for project success were integration, or collaboration among key government rural development agencies and community-based principles, specifically those related to village initiative and decision-making. While the picture is less clear, NFE training principles (in particular those related to the Thai concept of "khid pen") and linkages between formal and nonformal education appeared influential or potentially influential in combination with the above. Action research premises and steps were only fully operationalized in Songkhla province and clearly useful in one "high" success village.

Two operational elements within the project approach were key elements contributing to project success. The first was to approach the village through the village development committee as a whole and to provide this group with authority (e.g., decisions on village group projects, allocation of project seed money, etc.) as well as "training," and responsibilities (e.g., village mobilization, group project implementation, monitoring, etc.). It should be emphasized that this element was not part of the original project design, nor was it first suggested by any of the project principles. Rather, the recommendation and arguments for its adoption were first put forward during the process of project clarification by provincial representatives from other government development agencies.

The second was consistent in nature with the first but was applied to a different project relationship. This was the decentralization of project authority from the Bangkok department to the regional center to the provinces. The NFE Department Director-General and the regional center and STEP project director were the forces behind this movement. While this arrangement was not without difficulties and tension, its overall impact was highly positive in terms of developing a sense of project ownership in the provinces. To the extent that the provincial NFE centers were able to pass this sense on to other provincial development agencies, and/or their district and subdistrict offices, the likelihood of effective development service integration and project success increased.

4. Project Interventions *

Among the major project interventions the most important overall were (1) the project clarification meetings and final seminar, (2) the provision of seed money to the villages, and (3) in one province the project monitoring system. The first did much to contribute both to the soundness of the project design (principles and strategy) and to the sense of project ownership that emerged among the provincial NFE centers and certain other provincial agencies.

The seed money was essential not because of the amount involved, but rather for the commitment to project action it represented. Moreover, the STEP arrangements for the use of this seed money, unique in southern Thailand if not elsewhere, were important in one prominent respect. That is, the funds were granted to the village development committees which had the authority to make all fundamental decisions regarding its use within a broad set of criteria established in consultation with the NFE Department.

While overall project monitoring left much to be desired the system developed in one province not only served monitoring purposes but in many sites and localities became a force for fostering or, more often, sustaining integration and a mechanism for unstructured (or informal) educational programming in support of village group projects.

The other major interventions, i.e., the village operations workshops and follow-up education/ training programs related to

village group projects, fell far short of their potential in many cases. The workshops did, however, achieve their basic goals and, in addition, support development service integration and community-based principles. Within the Thai context, they also resulted in several innovations (e.g., phasing of the program into a series of short, sessions 2 or 3 days in length, the use of projective techniques for self-assessment of needs and resources, etc.) that are worthy of further consideration by the NFE Department and other adult training institutions. The most common shortcoming was the general lack of facilitating skills among the trainers and the rare use of team-trainers in the various workshop sessions. In some models much time was devoted to sessions peripheral to the major workshop tasks.

Few formal education and training programs were organized in support of village group projects and, when they were, their impact was as often minimal as it was significant. The reasons for this are, perhaps, several. First, the villagers were too involved in project action to show much interest in these activities. Second, the organizational requirements and standardization of many of these programs resulted in deleterious time delays between their need and conduct and a general lack of content relevance. Nonetheless, there were a few positive examples of programming of this nature and the intervention should not be discarded until the results of further efforts are analyzed.

B. VILLAGE PARTICIPANTS AND VILLAGE GROUP PROJECTS

1. Workshop Participants

732 individuals participated in the 21 workshops conducted with project funds. [*] 512 (69%) were villagers; development committee members, existing group leaders and activists, and neighborhood representatives. The remainder were local school teachers (often village residents) and subdistrict development volunteers and government development agents who served as resource persons. Only 21% of the total participants were women, despite efforts in Phase II workshops to encourage their participation in greater numbers.

2. Village Group Projects and Participants

Participants

A total of 84 projects conducted in 22 villages were credited to STEP. The total number of participant units (a family is counted as one participant unit, the same as an individual) involved in these projects as of December 1985 was 5,973. Considering that the average family size in the project villages as a whole is 5.97 and that 2846 of the participant units were families, the project's potential number of direct beneficiaries is at the maximum approximately 17,000 individuals.

Projects

The projects can be categorized into 6 broad areas. These are, in order of their frequency:

[*] Representatives from two villages attended one workshop as one project site was divided into two separate villages in the time gap between village selection and operations.

- > Income-generation (e.g., livestock and poultry-raising, fish ponds, vegetable gardening, marketing cooperatives, improving rubber sheeting, etc.) -- 30
- > Health and Sanitation (e.g., latrine construction, water supply, nutrition, etc.) -- 15
- > Educational Services (e.g., establishing pre-school centers, establishing or improving reading centers, etc.) -- 14
- > Infrastructure (e.g., road construction, improvements, village meeting centers, etc.) -- 9
- > Cooperative Stores -- 8
- > Other (e.g., environmental protection, welfare funds, etc.) -- 5

The village development committees allocated seed money in amounts varying from 5,000 to 17,000 baht to thirty-three of the eighty-four projects. There was no clear pattern between group project success and the use of seed money.

There were also no clear relationships between group project success and other project characteristic, e.g., type, extent of support training programs, etc.

C. BENEFITS AND COSTS

1. Benefits

Evidence marshalled by this evaluation suggests that STEP has had a generally positive impact on participating villagers and villages. These benefits fall into two broad categories; community participation and quality of life. The clearest appear to be the following:

TABLE 1 -- STEP'S BENEFITS

Benefits	Extent of Impact On	
	Individual Participants	Participating Villages
A. Community Participation	1. increase involvement in village groups	1. increase involvement in village groups
	2. higher participation in village meetings	
	3. increase participation in learning opportunities	
	4. increase practice of group problem-solving	
		2. increase involvement in problem-solving activities
		3. increase attendance at meetings called by govt officials
B. Quality of Life	Health and Sanitation	
	1. increase treatment of drinking water	1. increase treatment of drinking water
	2. increase awareness of govt health services in village	2. increase awareness of govt health services in vill.
	3. increase in recom- mended waste water disposal practices	3. increase in recom- mended waste water & animal dropping disposal practices
	4. increase FP practice	4. increase FP prac- tice
		5. greater possession standard latrines

TABLE 1 -- (Continued)

Benefits	Extent of Impact On	
	Individual Participants	Participating Villages
B. Quality of Life	Income	
	1. more have money left over after expenses	1. more have money left over after expenses
	2. more using left over money in productive ways	
	3. greater % of debt to cooperatives and less to private sources	2. greater % of debt to banks and private sources
	Education	
	1. greater participation in learning activities	1. greater participation in learning activities
		2. greater use of village reading center as a source of information
	Agriculture and Marketing	
	1. increase cooperative membership	1. increase cooperative membership
	2. increase use of compost	2. increase use of hybrid seed

Among these benefits the unique impact of STEP has been identified as the following:

1. increased use of group problem-solving,
2. increased participation in village meetings, and

3. trend to more improved economic status, i.e., more money left over after expenses, using it more productively, increased debt to cooperative, less debt to private sources.

2. Costs

The examination of costs focused on three areas; project operations, village workshops, and, more broadly, those often found in socio-economic and organizational (or institutional) areas. The first two were analyzed quantitatively. The later relied on impressions and qualitative feedback.

With respect to operational costs we found that for each baht of project recurrent expenses another one and a quarter baht were raised by the villagers themselves or contributed by government agencies. (The analysis here does not include NFE Department's counterpart funds.) These villager/other government agency contributions ranged from 26,900 baht per village group project in Satun to 9,000 baht in Nakornsri thammarat.

The overall project's total recurrent cost per village and per participant was 38,000 and 140 baht respectively. Village cost ranged from 34,800 baht in Nakornsri thammarat to 43,800 baht in Songkhla. Participant cost was from 100 baht in Satun to 510 baht in Songkhla.

The village level workshops averaged approximately 10,300 baht. The per day cost per participant ranged from 49 baht in Nakornsri thammarat to 68 baht in Songkhla. These costs were affected by distance to site and number of participating trainers as well as villagers.

While the efforts made to minimize the project's socio-economic and organizational or institutional costs were generally successful, several areas remained problematic. These were 1) tensions between the local school and the village leadership (headman and development committee) in two villages and 2) provincial NFE center performance in the National Literacy Campaign.

C. COMPOSITE OF A SUCCESSFUL VILLAGE

Taking the STEP experience as a whole, a range of village preproject characteristics or conditions appear to be generally reliable predictors of eventual village success. It must be emphasized that these characteristics are relative in nature and the lack of some or even many do not preclude the possibility of success. They are, in order of their relative reliability:

1. high use of fertilizer, insecticide, and hybrid seed;
2. low percentage of grade 10 graduations;
3. long distance from district center and from provincial center and district capital combined;
4. high previous participation in village activities;
5. relatively low degree of poverty;
6. high degree of access to and trust in government officials;
7. high interest in learning;
8. low negative view of future;
9. relatively equitable income distribution;
10. low level of overall educational attainment (literacy, primary, and lower secondary school completion);

11. strong village organizations;
12. small family size [*];
13. high percentage of families practicing birth control (Buddhist villages only);
14. large percentage of residents in productive age group;
15. high positive view of future.

It was also evident that the chances of success were greater in villages that included Thai Muslim residents in significant numbers (i.e., approximately 30% or higher).

An examination of 13 of these selected predictors that are applicable to the sample as a whole[*] provides an opportunity to substantiate or check their value and compare reliability among the four groupings. As the table below reveals the reliability of the 13 as a whole and by group is strong. The most reliable grouping is clearly that labelled "development readiness."

TABLE 2 -- A COMPARISON OF PREDICATOR GROUPINGS AND SUCCESS

PREDICTOR GROUPINGS (No. of Predictors)	AVERAGE RATING BY SUCCESS RANK		
	HIGH GROUP	MID GROUP	LOW GROUP
1. Village Setting & Infrastructure (3)	8.00	11.40	11.50
2. Development Readiness (5)	4.62	11.33	14.50
3. Socio-Economic (3)	6.14	9.83	11.17
4. Village Mobilization Potential (3)	6.75	6.33	12.33
OVERALL	6.25	11.00	19.80

[*] In all Thai Buddhist villages this predictor would be ranked first.

The final table presents the overall findings in a more visually powerful manner.

TABLE 3 -- THE VILLAGE PREDICTORS OF SUCCESS

ALL PREDICTORS	HIGH	MID	LOW
SUCCESS			
HIGH	BK, K, KTS, KS KP	NK, DL, BH	
MID	RN, PN	TSR, RK, PM	SC, TP
LOW			BB IPC, MS, TB, BP, IKSD

Factors examined that do not appear to be useful predictors are village size, health practices (except in all Thai Buddhist villages), literacy, and primary school completion. The situation regarding the strength or dominance of the village headman is more complex. This factor was most frequently present in "mid" success villages and only rarely found among those communities in the "high" and "low" success groups. We have suggested that the lack of strength or dominance of this individual presented opportunities for other leaders to emerge and for a situation was shared. When this occurred, success was clear. When it did not, success was minimal.

III. LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS[*]

A. STRATEGY

While development service integration and community-based principles have contributed clearly to project success, the STEP experience provides sufficient evidence to support continued efforts to foster formal and nonformal education linkages and the application of action research principles.

B. PROGRAM OPERATIONS AND APPROACH

1. Integration

The success STEP had with respect to collaboration among the 4 key rural development agencies can be attributed almost entirely to the extent to which NFE Center staff was able to draw representatives of these agencies into the project as part-owners. Among the concrete actions taken to achieve this, the following appeared to be effective.

The Village Development Committee as The "Glue"

Efforts to strengthen this local but unofficial administrative unit by working with them as a group in areas for which they are responsible (e.g., development planning, programming, and monitoring) is consistent with government policy and is easy to buy into. In all cases, therefore, it quickly attracted the eye of the key Ministry of Interior representatives at the district

[*] Based on a guidebook prepared in Thai for other provinces interested in initiating a STEP-type project.

(district officer) and province (governor) and often of at least several of the rural development ministries who recognized that it had the potential to make their job easier.

Involving Representatives from other Agencies from the Outset

Representatives from other agencies should be involved in the project's planning and design stages. If such activities have already taken place before involvement has been secured, a project review/clarification activity might be as valuable for other projects as it was for STEP.

Such involvement is more likely to secure the understanding and sense of ownership which, in turn, can lead to greater readiness to assist and less inclination to look at development in terms of bureaucratic compartments (that's your work, that's mine). It can also help to reduce unplanned duplication and improved project monitoring.

Adopt an Interagency Team Approach

The STEP experience in Satun and, to some degree, Nakornsrithammarat indicates that the creation of such a team reinforces the sense of shared project ownership and makes a wider range of human and material resources and professional perspectives available to the project. As far as the composition of the team is concerned, it is not only important to include individuals from the 4 key rural development ministries, but also a mixture of people from the provincial, district, subdistrict and, ideally, village school levels.

Continuity

For integration to be effective continuous participation is important. If the same individual representing an agency can not participate in a particular project team activity or even another person serves as a permanent or ad hoc replacement, information must be shared among them. This continuity and the sharing information among the staff within an agency at a particular administrative level and among agency representatives at different levels were persistent problems in STEP, even within the provinces where integration was generally significant. This situation was not substantially improved by the STEP newsletter mechanism. What did make it less problematic than it might have been was an agency's sense of shared project ownership (which was carefully fostered through interpersonal ties with certain agencies in both Nakornsrithammarat and Satun) and a feeling among fieldworkers and district officials that STEP was helping them do their job and achieve their "output projections" were more important. Also critical were highly visible visits to project villages by district and provincial level leaders in the presence of project staff.

Other actions found valuable were keeping various agency leaders informed through informal but somewhat regular visits and responding, to the extent possible, to their requests for help on other activities.

2. Linkages Between Formal and Nonformal Education

There is one overriding issue here. Stated simply, perhaps too simply, it is should the linkages be seen as a means or an end. Should they be mandated or imposed from above and planned on a nationwide scale or should national involvement be limited to a policy and resource encouragement of and commitment to such linkages.

The SIEP experience provides strong support for the latter approach. It is the project staff's view that these linkages should be formed around specific villager identified problems and project actions that respond to them. This village level process of development planning and action can be aided by the school and NFE personnel much in the same way it was in STEP. Once the problems are identified the learning resources of these organizations can be brought to bear on them in the schools and, when requested, with the community's adults. Examples of this occurring in STEP, while not extensive, are impressive (Bo Hin, Ban Khaw, Khuan Sung, Nangkaew, and, more recently, Khothongsom). In these villages, all ranked among the "high" success group, relatively formal and informal learning opportunities in support of or related to village projects were planned and conducted with villager inputs. The staff sees the direction for creating persisting linkages as one which evolves from collaboration on a task related to a village-identified problem to a mechanism in which the two resources are linked under the monitoring of their clients or their representatives, e.g., the "education and culture section" of the village development committees, the school

committee, the Tambon Council education committee and the teacher on the Tambon Council Advisory Group.

The staff views the alternative approach as less practical, both in terms of responding effectively to villager needs and creating a bureaucratic "win-win" situation for the two organizations involved. With respect to the first point this alternative's basic weakness is that it tends to put officials (school and NFE personnel) in a dominant position from which they can maintain, without challenge, widespread practices such as promoting solutions they consider best -- or can teach most easily -- to problems they perceive to be most serious. To the contrary the approach adopted by STEP allows village leadership, at least to challenge such views and in many cases, through negotiations, to share influence or authority as well as responsibility.

The bureaucratic difficulty with the alternative is essentially one of pressure. Are the linkages to be forged by pressure from one agency on the other or from a policy-decision made in distant Bangkok? Neither approach bodes well for long term maintenance of the linkages. The approach used in STEP, while more indirect and, therefore, likely to be slower, creates powerful motivational forces within the community itself, e.g., at the village level the development committee. In the STEP experience it is clear that school administrators can rarely work at cross-purposes with a well-organized development committee and enjoy or achieve rewards from their efforts.

3. Site Selection

Individual Sites

While villages consisting of one or several large contiguous residential areas are generally easier to work in than with a number of smaller separate neighborhoods spread over an extensive area, STEP utilized several strategies to overcome the problems inherent in the latter arrangement. The most encouraging was the use of neighborhood representatives in Phase II sites in Nakorn-srithammarat.

Chapter V provides a number of predictors of project success. These could be used to help the staff of related projects make more educated guesses concerning the potential for success in a particular site.

Project Sites as a Whole

STEP encountered certain difficulties related to communications and project monitoring in several provinces due, in part, to the fact that the project sites were spread out over a wide physical area and often located in divergent directions from the provincial seat. Clearly, there are advantages to working with sites that are concentrated in one or several areas as was the case in both Satun and Phatthalung.

The selection should be a task of the interagency team or an existing interagency committee. Ideally, this should be done at the district level. When there are compelling reasons for making the selection at a higher level, district representatives know-

ledgeable about local development plans and issues should be consulted for advice.

Provinces initiating a similar type project, there are several other issues that should be considered. First, is it desirable to phase the effort? STEP benefitted greatly from lessons learned during its first phase and was able to apply many in the second. Second, should you begin with villages that appear to have a good chance for success, leaving the more problematic ones for a second phase? STEP found a mix of potentially easy and potentially difficult villages was valuable, with the easy ones outnumbering the difficult in the first phase and the reverse in the second. Third, in several provinces participating in STEP the collective consideration of issues such as those raised above by an interagency group was an important team-building activity, as valuable as much for that as for the insights developed.

A final recommendation here is in the form of an issue for consideration. Should the villages have a role in the selection process? For example, should they be required to apply for participation? Should they have the opportunity to discuss their selection with project staff and be given the right to decide against participation? The former would probably give advantages to the stronger, better organized villages and has not been too successful a mechanism in other projects such as the government's "Off-Season Civil Works Employment Project." The latter might be an important breakthrough in that it would allow a village just initiating a series of important development efforts to reject an

additional project which might cause undue diversions and strains on local resources (or, to use the term found elsewhere in this report, to avoid a "development boom town" situation.)

4. Seed Money

The provision of seed money was a critical project element and without it there is little likelihood those benefits that villagers achieved with respect to community participation and quality of life would have been considerably less. The key here was not, however, the size of these funds as there is some evidence to indicate that the amount provided the various villages could have been, in some sites at least, much less than the 17,000 baht allotment in STEP. Rather, the funds, while important in themselves to some degree, were critical to village motivation and commitment (this project is for real). Finally, the fact the village development committees were given control over these funds may have been the most variable of all for such a provision supported in concrete terms the project's commitment to village initiative and decision-making.

In all but several cases some of the value of the seed money was lost when the funds were not distributed expeditiously. There were two reasons for this. First, and most common, was the temporary loss of or reduction in village group momentum. Second, and more seriously, were the questions about sincerity (Is this project for real?) and commitment to community-based principles of village initiative and decision-making (Do they really trust us to handle these funds accurately, honestly?) long

delays raised in the minds of some villagers.

5. Coordination/monitoring

In STEP the most effective approach to coordination and monitoring was one which assigned small teams of NFE center staff responsibility for a group of project sites located in the same general area. (It should be pointed out that in the particular province that developed this approach and, to a lesser degree, in the other provinces the NFE center staff responsible for monitoring worked collaboratively with local officials from other agencies.) The key advantages of this approach were continuity and the opportunity for comparison and cross-fertilization among villages.

The other provinces generally assigned an individual staff person to be responsible for monitoring one or several sites. There were numerous disadvantages to this approach, which were magnified in two provinces where the new staff were brought in to take over for those who had been involved several time during the course of the project's field operations. In the province where a system of individual assignments was not unsuccessful the staff were matched with a site that was close to their original or current home. This situation gave them easy access and, often, good indigeneous contacts (e.g., friends, relatives, etc.). Questions of bias did not come up here, although in adopting such an approach one should be aware of that possibility. Initially, even in this province, the individual monitors did not always share information, the identity of key contacts, and, occasionally,

decisions or agreements made with the villagers with the provincial project director and other members of the project team. This shortcoming was partially overcome by the appointment of one individual to monitor on a less frequent basis all the project sites.

Regardless of who is to be responsible for monitoring, the activity should be as systematic as possible. That is, it should involve a regular schedule planned in collaboration with the villagers so that it will take into account village work/life cycle requirements. Several provincial approaches, particularly that followed in Satun, illustrate how monitoring can be done both without putting further burdens on villager time (e.g., by having visits coincide with the regular monthly meeting of the village development committee) and in support of other development efforts (e.g., strengthening the village development committees). They also found that a system of regularly scheduled visits provide villagers with opportunities for both structured and unstructured learning related to their projects. Often the village group participants would confront the monitors with a series of prepared questions related to the technical, organizational or financial aspects of their activities. They also had opportunities to question the district and subdistrict development agents that often were invited to accompany the monitors in the province under discussion.

Regarding monitoring between the region and the province no written feedback system worked effectively, even though the

provinces were able to hire with project funds one staff person who was supposed to assume the responsibility for completing these forms in addition to any tasks that met province needs.

Visits by regional center staff to the provinces and project sites plus a combination of scheduled and ad hoc meetings were the only mechanisms for monitoring and feedback that proved workable in the STEP experience.

C. VILLAGE OPERATIONS WORKSHOPS

1. Curriculum Design

The curriculums followed by the various STEP models tended to be too long and occasionally redundant. While emphasis should be placed on problem-solving processes and skills, all these models can be made more concise by applying the following criteria to each session. Will the participants gain something from the session that they "must know, should know, or would be nice to know." The basic point here is that the workshops should devote sole attention to the specific tasks the participants must perform in the process of problem-identification and project planning. Peripheral matters such as those related to "group-building," "developing an appropriate spirit," "national development policies," if at all necessary, should be integrated into the core task-specific workshop activities.

Using serious, thought-provoking activities (not the more traditional ice-breaking games) that required villager participation from the first session, sent clear signals that the workshop

was to follow a different set of rules and procedures. Changes from workshop-opening lectures in the Phase I models of Phatthalung and Songkhla provinces to activities of the type described immediately above helped to contribute to more a more efficient overall workshop.

2. Facilitators/Trainers and Resource Persons

Adherence to techniques based on NFE adult learning principles is critical. Relatively unusual tactics provincial project trainers uncovered during their conduct of the workshops that show promise include those used in Satun to make it clear that it was the participants responsibility to decide by leaving the workshop at critical decision-making points, not saying anything or offering leading nonverbal when looked to in the course of a difficult discussion of alternatives, and not serving as a compromiser. This team considered it essential that the villagers themselves negotiate differences among themselves and with resource persons from the various rural development agencies.

Another important element in this province's model was the decision to bring in external sources of information and expertise only after the villagers had the opportunity to do their own thinking and function as a group. This tactic resulted in an analytical, questioning response to the information and suggestions, a situation that contrasted sharply with that surrounding similar inputs Phase I villages in other provinces.

A team approach to training appears to be essential for the purposes and nature of these workshops and the complexities of

the issues being addressed. The more usual approach involving a division of the responsibilities for the various activities among a number of individuals resulted in the following weaknesses. When an individual was not leading an activity, he or she was often not following it and, when continuity was not lost, opportunities for reinforcement or more indepth analysis often were. Moreover, for all but the most highly experienced, energetic facilitators, critical probe or follow-up questions or issue-posing is an uncertain skill. When the main facilitator missed opportunities for such questions, there was often no one else around to do so. It has also been suggested that the team approach to the conduct of a workshop session can occasionally lead to unintended confusion and disagreement among the facilitators. In instances when this occurred naturally, i.e., was not contrived, the effect was generally positive in that it helped to break down remaining visages of villager perceptions that "only teacher knows." The following example is illustrative of the value of such disagreements.

To summarize, we would recommend that trainers not be too concerned about periodic confusion and that even a little bit of anarchy might be valuable in certain situations. Certainly, the experiences of Satun in both the Phase 1 and Phase 2 villages tends to be supportive of this unusual statement.

It became apparent that, in addition to the normal preparations required before conducting a workshop, it was necessary for the trainers to undertake some additional tasks for workshops of

the nature involved here. Most critically, they include preparing in advance some probe questions that might be useful. Two advantages can be derived from this. First, most trainers lack the experience to come up with sound questions of this type during the course of an intense, highly participatory activity. Second, to prepare such questions one must try to anticipate a wide variety of possible participant reactions to certain issues, activities, etc. that will arise during the various workshop sessions.

3. Scheduling

The obvious needs statement here as it is generally ignored. The STEP provincial teams were scrupulous about proposing workshop dates that were suited to the villagers seasonal and daily work demands/requirements. For example, they avoided planning and harvest seasons; built in lengthy midday breaks on Fridays in villages with Thai Muslim residents, began midmorning and included lengthy lunch/rest breaks in areas where villagers were active in rubber, and made last minute schedule changes to enable fishermen to take advantage of favorable wind and tide conditions.

An important breakthrough in terms of NFE Department programming was dividing workshop implementation into a series of short 2-3 day stages with breaks of a week or more in between. Originally suggested to enable villagers to avoid long absences from the work and/or family responsibilities, there were numerous other advantages of this arrangement. In addition to meeting with

the practically unanimous support of the villagers on the basis of other demands on their time, this staging allowed the participants to discuss project ideas with family members and neighbors before coming to any decisions regarding appropriate projects and their interest in joining project groups. In some models such discussion was stimulated by short breaks between session assignments. In other cases the participating development committee members and existing group leaders initiated such discussion on their own. During the second phase workshops most provinces took action to encourage these discussions in all sites.

Finally, the breaks between sessions gave the facilitators/-trainers an opportunity to identify development agency resource persons who specialized in areas related to village project interests and to brief them on village thinking and directions so that their input could be targetted more effectively.

D. EVALUATION

1. Community Surveys

The initial community survey was planned to fulfill two important purposes, i.e., provide baseline data for evaluation purposes and information on existing village conditions for use in the village operations workshops. The STEP project experience indicates the latter function is unnecessary as more detailed census (as opposed to sample) data is often available from other agencies (e.g., community development, public health). Moreover, as the experiences of several provinces (Satun, Phatthalung) excellent data on the village could often be generated by the

workshop participants themselves in response to a variety of activities utilizing projective techniques.

On the basis of the experience of analyzing the data generated by the survey conducted at three points during the project and the use of that data in this evaluation, we now have evidence to guide efforts to reduce the scope, complexity, and, therefore, costs of this survey. Moreover, with further analysis of this data we should be able to further reductions in these areas.

Some difficulties with the quality of the data obtain were due to the change in interviewers from one survey round to another. It is recommended that, since the interviewers receive payment for both their training and work, agreements or contracts regarding their involvement should be made on a survey-to survey basis, but rather involve one covering all the surveys planned.

2. Design and Processes

There were a range of problems encountered in our effort that could be easily avoided by others. First, data collection scheduling, in terms of both season and time of day, must take into account village work/life cycles. In STEP it was often essential to conduct interviews at night which, in some cases, added to the cost of the effort.

The period of time that lapsed between the series of 3 surveys in STEP was too short, covering as it did only 17 months from project start-up and in the cases of three Phase I villages

only 8 months from the beginning of their group projects. The brief time involved made it more difficult to get clear readings regarding impact.

The modified quasi-experimental design was practical and can easily be pursued with other regular NFE Department projects within the constraints of budgetting for such programs.

The collection of qualitative as well as quantitative data provides opportunities for more meaningful evaluations. The former, however, requires more time, greater skills and sensitivity (i.e., training) and more cost. It should, nonetheless, be undertaken, at least in the first few years, in a project activity with characteristics and purposes similar to STEP. With more regular nonformal education programming, such data might be sought on a selective basis.

3. Further Research

This evaluation of STEP only begins to use the data that has been collected. We would suggest an appropriate next step would be to examine the data on a village to village basis in order to gather further evidence, supportive or otherwise, regarding the largely global findings reported on here. Particular attention could be given "high" and "low" success villages (regarding impact) and villages that where globally identified predictors of success appear least applicable.

The NFE Department in general does not give much attention to development theory in its program planning, although there are some indications this is changing. At present a number of De-

APPENDICIES TO THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FINAL SUCCESS RATINGS

HIGH GROUP

Phase I

Khothongsom/KTS
Bo Hin/BH
Khuan Sung/KS
Ban Khaw/BK

Phase II

Nang Kaew/NK
Ban Kanan/K
Khaw Phun/KP
Dan Lod/DL

MID GROUP

Phase I

Phrong Ngu/PN
Thung Phrur/TP
Thungsamrong/TSR

Phase II

Ram Kaew/RK
Pa Mai/PM
Sri Chai/SC
Rawai Nua/RN

LOW GROUP

Phase I

Pa Chaeng/PC
Mai Siap/MS
Thung Bua/TB

Phase II

Khuan So/KSO
Bangbucha/BB
Ban Phai/BP

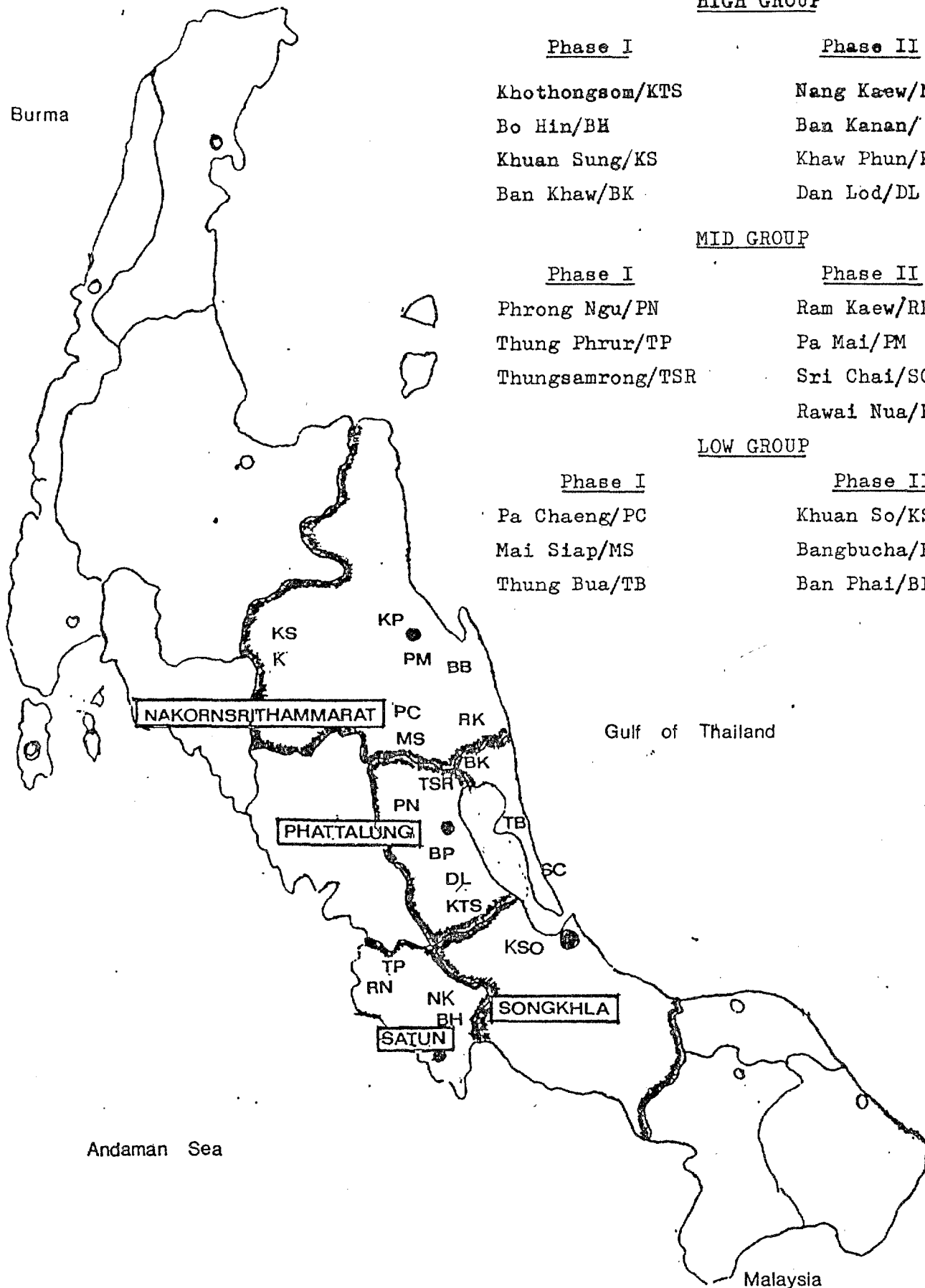


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- Case Studies -- 10 Phase I Villages
- "So You'd Like to Start a STEP-like Project" -- A Guide to the Model
- List of Project Generated Research Documents and Print and Nonprint Materials